

Female “Empowerment” Through Clothing and Media and its Correlation with Body
Image

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Billie Simmons, who provided me with the grace, confidence, and fortitude that has made me the woman I am today. I love you, and know that you will always be with me.

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ABSTRACT

Research has indicated that the over-sexualization of women through advertisements, TV programs, and other forms of media has skewed the true meaning of female strength and empowerment. This experiment explored the perceptions of empowerment of female music industry artists related to their sexualized presentation in a sample of college students 18-25 years of age, also known as “millennials.” I also assessed the relationships between these perceptions, self-evaluation of body image, and self-reported objectification of women. Celebrities who presented in modest, less sexualized ways were perceived as more empowering compared to those who presented in more revealing dress and behaving in a more sexualized manner during performances. No significant relationship between body consciousness and perceptions of any of the celebrities was found. Objectification of Women was higher for males than females. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that the sexualization of women in media has increased in the past few decades. Currently in 2016, there are numerous sources in popular media, including tabloids such as *People Magazine*, *OK Magazine*, and high fashion publications like *Vogue*, *Elle*, and *Glamour*, from which society has deemed it appropriate for women to expose themselves to the public, both figuratively and literally. Some media sources, such as the music industry, have female artists who promote the objectification of women through their clothing and behavior. Pop stars such as Miley Cyrus and Nicki Minaj have ostensibly aligned their careers with exposing as much of themselves as possible, leaving little room to the imagination of their adoring fans. Even female superheroes, figures that are designed to promote virtues such as bravery and charity, are clad in provocative and suggestive “battle” attire while fighting crime and saving the world. At the same time, the public, specifically males, are blamed, scorned, and reprimanded for looking at women as objects to be ogled and depreciated. Society has adopted such opinions about the portrayals of various female figures and role models: the more a woman exposes herself, the more empowered and inspirational she becomes.

Scanty clothing, however, does not represent the liberation of women or feministic ideologies. Young women such as Bindi Irwin and Malala Yousafzai, who clothe themselves conservatively, are recognized worldwide for their positive impact on global issues. Because these young women represent the female population in a

wholesome and inspiring manner, they have the potential to positively impact college students as they strive to discover their personal identities. Alongside pop stars like Miley Cyrus and Nicki Minaj, there exist famous and noteworthy music industry female celebrities whom young girls may look up to with equal admiration and veneration, like Adele and Taylor Swift, who are known for their wholesome appearances, lifestyles, and their so-called “good girl” image. Neither of the pop stars over-sexualizes her performance or highlights her feminine assets in order to garner the affection of her followers.

Objectification and Sexualization of Women in the Media

Several studies have investigated the sexualization of females in the media. The relationship between various types of media exposure (e.g., magazines, film, music industry) and such individual factors as body image and perception of females have been investigated. Graff, Murnen, and Krause (2013), conducted a study of two magazine publications, *Seventeen Magazine* and *Girl's Life*, which were analyzed to describe the sexualization of their female cover models. Their findings suggest that both publications had augmented the amount of skin shown on the models over a time span of several years. Results also revealed that the over-exposed female bodies in these magazines were associated with lower body esteem of the girls and women who read the magazines (Graff, et al., 2013).

Pritchard and Cramblitt (2014) conducted a similar experiment on the desire for muscularity in men and thinness in women as influenced by television and magazines.

The study, however, focused exclusively on college students enrolled in a general psychology class under the age of 25, and measured the level of media exposure to the drive for thinness and muscularity in men and women using online surveys. According to research mentioned in the article conducted in the United States, body dissatisfaction is exhibited when certain goals and ideals regarding physical appearances are not met. These impossible ideals are exacerbated by depictions of muscular men and thin but toned women on the covers of magazines and in television programs.

The results of the study suggested that increased exposure to media and non-athletic body ideals had a positive correlation with the drive for thinness in both men and women. The study also suggested that, when media were used as sources of information for methods on how to achieve an ideal body, it exacerbated the desire for thinness in women. Furthermore, exposure to athletic body types through television and magazines had a greater positive correlation with the desire for more muscularity in both women and men than exposure to images of non-muscular body types (Pritchard & Cramblitt, 2014). One unique result of the study mentioned by the researchers was the absence of a significant correlation between societal pressures to have the “perfect body” and a man’s desire to be muscular. This result surprised the researchers because there was a significant correlation between the drive for muscularity and comparisons of the body of general and athletic media pictures and using that media as a guide for how to obtain a modelesque body.

Since college students in the United States were the only subjects to be surveyed, the researchers suggested that other countries and age groups should be included in future studies to gain more understanding of the cultural and age differences in self-perceptions of body image and satisfaction. The researchers also limited themselves to exploring only television and magazine media, but realized that social media and the internet have the potential for enormous influence over college students as far as body image and dissatisfaction is concerned. The researchers suggested that future experiments explore familial and peer influences on body image and the drive to be muscular and/or thin.

Grey, Horgan, Long, Herzog, and Lindemulder (2016) sought to explore whether or not women experienced more self-objectification if they viewed objectifying images of other women as opposed to body-competent or product-only images. The researchers had 66 participants in their study, consisting of female undergraduate students from an Upper-Midwestern university in the United States. Twenty images were shown to the participants, which included objectifying images of women as well as seven distractor images. Participants were asked to rate the images on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal) Likert scale based on how objectifying they were. Body-objectifying images, body-competent images, or images of women using their bodies in more positive ways (i.e., exercise, driving, singing, etc.) were presented to the study participants.

Results of the study supported their hypothesis, showing that viewing degrading images of women as opposed to other images made the participants more likely to self-objectify their own bodies (Grey et al, 2016). The researchers also noted that the

depiction of the bodies in the images was more important than whether or not the figures were actually present. The experiment, however, did have limitations. A more diverse sample (i.e., not only females) could be more beneficial in future research. Because the students also received credit for participating in the study, it could be argued that they answered questions based on external rewards rather than taking the time to answer each question thoughtfully. A student's answer could be called into question because there were ulterior motives for finishing the survey, but those risks should be taken into consideration with any study that offers incentives and rewards for participating. All-in-all, the researchers conducted a successful experiment, which provided the scientific community with information regarding how the objectification of women in the media possibly affects an average college woman's opinions of her own body (Grey, et al., 2016).

Mikorski and Szymanski (2016) conducted a study which, in comparison to Grey, et al. (2016), concentrated on males' derogatory attitudes and thoughts about women. The researchers looked specifically at the relationship between a male's sexual objectification of women by body evaluation and unwanted sexual advances and three measurements of "masculine" gender roles (playboy, power over women, and violence). Association with abusive male peers, pornography use, and Facebook use, which were suspected to affect the relationship between masculine norms and the sexualization of women, were assessed. The study sample consisted of 329 heterosexual male undergraduate students. Measures that were utilized in the study included surveys that

explored masculine norms, pornography use, associations with abusive male peers, Facebook use, and a “slightly modified” version of the Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale, which evaluates unwanted sexual advances and body evaluation.

Mikorski and Szymanski (2016) reported a positive correlation between their predictor variables and male objectification of women. The researchers were limited, however, by their sample as participants were recruited from a predominately white college and were therefore not as representative of the general population as it could have been. Mikorski and Szymanski’s data was also based on self-report surveys, which are dependent on the honesty and integrity of the subject filling them out. Despite the fact that the surveys were anonymous, it is possible that participants were somewhat dishonest while filling out the survey in order to create a more positive image of themselves. Future studies should take this limitation into account and include a more representative sample.

Sexualization of Women in Advertisements

Focusing on the relationship between exposure to sexualized advertisements and one’s perception of sexual abuse, Machia and Lamb (2009) conducted research exploring the possible correlation between people who viewed advertisements of children dressed in sexualized manners and their score on the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale (CSAM). Participants were split into three groups: “Sexy Adults,” featuring provocative advertisements of women, “Sexy Child,” who were shown ads of young girls sexually dressed as older females, and “Nature,” the control group, which included ads depicting

nature. The researchers hypothesized that participants of the “Sexy Child” group would score higher on the CSAM (i.e., endorsed more negative stereotypes of abuse) than those who were members of the “Sexy Adult” and “Nature” groups. Though their original hypothesis was not supported, the results showed a higher score on the CSAM for those who viewed advertisements featuring any woman versus the participants who were shown images of nature (Machia & Lamb, 2009).

Finally, in a study of “choice feminism” and media exposure, forty years of *Rolling Stone* magazine covers were examined in a longitudinal content analysis conducted by Hatton and Trautner (2013). The researchers analyzed whether or not men and women who had been featured on the cover of the magazine had become more sexualized over the years; proportions of the gender that was most sexualized were also observed and recorded.

Hatton and Trautner (2013) found that women were disproportionately featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in sexually explicit conditions, and that those images had a positive correlation with the rising popularity of the magazine over the years (Hatton & Trautner, 2013). The researchers also observed an increase in so-called feministic language. As noted in the article, the word “feminist” has come to represent anything that women do, “...including ‘choosing’ to get breast implants, pose nude on magazine covers, or starve themselves” (Hatton & Trautner 2013, p. 74). This “positive” representation of women by the media only serves as their justification to continue to display women on magazine covers in explicitly sexual ways. Hatton and Trautner

(2013), however, firmly believed that the exhibition of women as sex objects is the polar opposite of female empowerment, and only serves to further deprecate, degrade, and objectify the female population. They provided suggestions for future research, including an exploration into how editors choose what images will be included on the cover and in the content of each magazine. The researchers also questioned whether differences in sexualization in different races and ethnicities are apparent, which they hope will bring more awareness to the institutional over-sexualization of women instead of the more individualized or case-by-case basis.

Media Representations of Female Empowerment

Brinkman, Khan, Jedinak, and Vetere (2015) formulated an experiment with the goal of describing college students' reflections of the ways in which media depicted female empowerment at an all-female college (2015). Study participants ($N = 19$) wrote a paper about their perceptions of how women are portrayed in the media for a women's studies course. The assignment was required for the course, but the decision of whether or not to participate in the study would not affect the students' grades. Only the papers written by the women who elected to participate would be included in the study. Multiple themes were represented in the papers, discussing both positive and negative depictions of women in the media.

Limitations of the study included that the participants of the study came from an all-female college who were enrolled in a women's studies course (Brinkman, et al., 2015). This could have caused some biased opinions of how women are portrayed by the

media since the students often talked about the subjects of female empowerment and feminism. As a result, there was a chance that their opinions did not accurately represent those of the general population's. Because of the researchers' choice to use written materials to obtain their subjects' opinions, they were also unable to ask follow-up questions to ensure that their participants expressed themselves clearly. Despite these limitations, the researchers discovered that participants were critical of the representations of women in the media. Furthermore, the students within the sample did not consider the pictures they were shown to be portrayals of female empowerment (Brinkman, et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Current Study

Purpose: I described millennials' interpretation of what "female empowerment" in media images and videos indicated, and assessed the possible correlations this perception had with a person's own body image.

Thesis Statement: Mass media have negatively influenced perceptions of female empowerment, skewing its true definition and causing psychological and emotional confusion to its audience, particularly regarding body image.

Hypotheses: It was predicted that college students would indicate that lack of clothing or sexualized attire and behavior in media presentations does not equal female empowerment. Furthermore, this idea, which is presented and endorsed by popular media, would be negatively correlated with self-perception of body image of college students.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

A sample of college students ($N = 85$) taking various psychology classes at Middle Tennessee State University were originally included in the study. One participant's survey had to be excluded from the final data analysis because the "Objectified Body Consciousness Scale" was left out. Students were recruited from MTSU's Psychology Research Pool and class or extra credit was given to them for participating in the study by their professors. Males made up 26.2% of the sample, and females made up 73.8%. The age range of participants was limited to ages 18-25 years old ($M = 19.19$, $SD = 1.62$). The age range was limited in order to specifically focus on the opinions and perceptions of young adult college students on issues related to female empowerment, the objectification of women, body image, and the possible correlations that existed between each subject. Both underclassmen (freshman and sophomores) and upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) were represented in the study. Underclassmen made up 85.8 percent of participants; upperclassmen made up 14.3 percent. Participants included Caucasians (46.4%), followed by African American students (36.9%), and 16% other ethnic identities. Sixty-five percent of the students identified as Christian, making up the vast majority of participants. Other religious identification included Buddhism (6%), Islam (3.6%), Judaism (1.2%), and "Other" (13.1%). Those who chose not to answer made up 10.7% of the participant population.

Measures

Demographic information. Participants were given a demographic form to complete on which they were asked to identify their age, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, and level of education (see Appendix A). An option was available for each question if participants did not wish to disclose such information.

Body image. All participants completed the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996), which asks participants to self-report their body consciousness (see Appendix B). The survey was made up of 24 questions, each using a 7-point Likert scale with ratings from 1, “Strongly Disagree, to 7 “Strongly Agree”. The questionnaire includes three subscales: *Body Surveillance*, measuring one’s body by how it looks or feels; *Body Shame*, measuring how good or bad a person believes they are based on cultural standards of appearance; and *Appearance Control Beliefs*, which measures what a person believes controls their appearance (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Scores were calculated by finding the sum of 21 items, after reverse coding specified items. The total possible point score ranges from 24-168, with higher scores representing a higher body consciousness. In this study, the OBCS was used as a measure of body image.

Media exposure. A measure of media exposure was completed by participants (see Appendix C). Questions included how many hours per week they devoted to watching television, their preferred mediums of entertainment such as television sets, computers, and various forms of mobile devices, genres of video and music they exposed

themselves to, how often/did they read tabloid publications, and how regularly they watched music videos. Point values were assigned to questions 1-3, 7, and 8, which address exposure to video and social media sites. Questions 1-3 were rated using a scale from 1 point, 0-2 hours, to 4 points, 9+ hours. Questions 7 and 8 were scaled from 1 point, “Almost never,” to 5 points, “Daily.” Each participant’s score was added up and given a total score of exposure to video and print media.

Popular media images of women. For the final portion of the survey, participants were asked to answer a series of 14 questions designed to assess opinions and perceptions that college students have with regards to how empowered the female celebrities are and if they inspire empowerment in others (see Appendix D). Items were presented with a five-point Likert scale (1=True, 5=False). Questions 6, 9, and 10 focused specifically on the issue of female empowerment and were summed as a measure of perceived empowerment. The higher that participants scored on the survey meant that they did not feel that the celebrity inspired empowerment, while a low score indicate that the participant did perceive the celebrity to be inspiring and empowering.

Print media. Participants were presented with two print images of Miley Cyrus and Taylor Swift wearing various amounts and type of clothing. There were two different pairs of images, one with the pop stars posing at a red carpet event, and the other as they were performing at a concert. Some groups viewed the “posed” images, while others looked at the “performance” images.

Video media. Video clips of two young female celebrities in popular culture of similar age and popularity (i.e., Adele and Nicki Manaj) performing were shown to the participants, after which they were asked questions based on what they had just seen. The clips consisted of one minute of performances by the two celebrities at televised events.

Objectification of women. Participants also completed a self-assessment survey designed to rate their objectification of women in their daily interactions and activities (see Appendix E). The items were presented with a five-point Likert scale (1=Always – 5=Never). Items were summed to obtain an overall objectification score after reverse scoring specified items. Higher scores indicate that participants were less objectifying than those with lower scores.

Procedures

After approval was obtained from MTSU's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F), recruitment began. The experiment was conducted in small groups of participants, with each group including no more than 20 participants. Participants first provided informed consent (see Appendix G), then began the experiment. Participants were instructed to put away and silence or turn off any electronic devices. Packets then were passed out, including all measures in counterbalanced order (to control for potential order effects). The "Popular Media Images of Women" questionnaires (4; one for each of the celebrities presented) were together at either the beginning or end of the packets. Half of the groups viewed the videos and print images first, then completed the

questionnaire packet; the other groups first completed the questionnaire packets, then viewed the videos and print images. Videos and print images were presented in counterbalanced order (i.e., both videos then both print images or vice versa) as were the orders of the celebrities. The researcher's personal laptop or a classroom screen was used to display the images and videos depending on the availability of the technology and the size of the groups. Videos and print images were presented to the whole group, one image at a time, after which the participants completed the rating scale for that video/image independently. Once all participants completed the rating scale, the next video/image was presented and the process continued.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using the SPSS software package. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the three outcome measures assessing personal behavior and self-image for the full sample.

It was hypothesized that the female celebrities who were more scantily clad and acting in inappropriate and sexual ways (i.e., Nicki Minaj and Miley Cyrus) would be rated as less empowering than those dressing and acting more conservatively (i.e., Adele and Taylor Swift). Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for the Popular Media Images of Women scale for each of the celebrities. T-tests were used to analyze the data.

The first t-test compared ratings on the video performances of Adele and Nicki Minaj. Participants considered Adele to be significantly more empowering than Nicki, $t(83) = -9.328, p < 0.001$. The second t-test compared perceptions of photos of Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus as they performed during concerts. The data for this t-test also showed a significant effect; participants found Swift, who wore more clothing and was dressed less sexualized, to be more empowering than Cyrus, who wore an outfit that revealed most of her body, $t(42) = -4.778, p < 0.001$. Images of Swift and Cyrus posing at awards ceremonies also were shown so that participants would have the opportunity to view the celebrities in a different environment. Again, students found Swift to be more empowering than Cyrus, $t(39) = 3.128, p < 0.001$.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for all dependent measures for the full sample

| <u><i>Measure</i></u> | <u><i>N</i></u> | <u><i>M</i></u> | <u><i>SD</i></u> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Objectification of Women Scale (OOW) | 79 | 52.87 | 5.63 |
| Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) | 81 | 103.43 | 16.05 |
| Media Exposure Scale | 81 | 11.11 | 2.69 |

Note. OOWS scores range from 13 to 65; higher scores indicate less objectification of women. OBCS scores range from 24 to 168; higher scores indicate more problematic body consciousness. Media exposure scores range from 5-22; higher scores reflect more exposure to video and print media.

Table 2

Ratings of Empowerment from the Popular Media Images of Women scale for each of the celebrities

| <u><i>Celebrity</i></u> | <u><i>N</i></u> | <u><i>M</i></u> | <u><i>SD</i></u> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Adele Performance Video | 84 | 5.99 | 2.31 |
| Nicki Minaj Performance Video | 84 | 9.12 | 3.14 |
| Miley Cyrus Posed Picture | 40 | 11.28 | 2.86 |
| Miley Cyrus Performance Picture | 43 | 11.26 | 2.90 |
| Taylor Swift Posed Picture | 40 | 7.88 | 2.59 |
| Taylor Swift Performance Picture | 43 | 8.28 | 3.16 |

Note. Scores are the sum of three items from the scale. Scores range from 3 to 15; Higher scores reflect less perceived empowerment.

Body consciousness was predicted to be associated with perceptions of empowerment of the female celebrities. Specifically, the more empowering one perceives scantily clad celebrities, the more problematic one's body consciousness would be. One's body consciousness would not be associated with perceptions of empowerment of more modestly dressed and behaving celebrities. A Pearson Product Correlation coefficient was calculated for each celebrity empowerment rating and the score on the OBCS. Table 3 provides the correlations among these scores. There was no significant relationship between body consciousness and perceptions of any of the celebrities.

It also was hypothesized that higher levels of broad media exposure would correlate with higher levels of female objectification; that is, the more media that one is exposed to, the more objectification of women one would report. Table 3 offers the correlations between the scores. The results that were calculated did not support the hypothesis. When comparing objectification scores for the video performances, neither Adele $r(79) = -.22, p < .05$ nor Nicki's $r(79) = -.01, p < .96$ scores were statistically significant. The same result was found between scores calculated for Taylor $r(78) = -.18, p < .13$ and Miley $r(78) = -.21, p < .78$. This shows that the amount of broad media exposure had a negative correlation with levels of female objectification.

Finally, it was predicted that male participants would show higher levels of female objectification compared to female participants. A *t*-test also was used to

Table 3

Correlation coefficients among the dependent measures for the full sample.

| <i>Measure</i> | NE | TE | ME | OBCS | OOW | MedExp |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|------|-------|--------|
| AdeleEmpow (AE) | .40*** | .38*** | .18 | -.04 | -.22* | .08 |
| NickiEmpow (NE) | 1 | .23* | .40*** | .15 | -.01 | -.02 |
| TaylorEmpow | .23 | 1 | .20 | .09 | -.18 | .02 |
| MileyEmpow | .40*** | .20 | 1 | .06 | -.21 | .05 |
| OBCS | .15 | .09 | .06 | 1 | -.07 | .15 |
| OOW | -.01 | -.18 | -.21 | -.07 | 1 | -.18 |
| MediaExp | -.02 | .02 | .05 | .15 | -.18 | 1 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

compare female versus male objectification scores. Means were used to compare the factors, with lower scores indicating more objectification of women than higher scores. The results showed that male participants ($M = 50.00$, $SD = 6.37$) did report objectifying women more than did females ($M = 53.85$, $SD = 5.06$), $t(77) = -2.75$, $p = .007$. Objectified Body Consciousness scores also were compared by gender using an independent samples t -test. Higher OBC scores indicate higher levels of body consciousness (i.e., more negative body perception). Males ($M = 102.19$, $SD = 13.58$) and females ($M = 103.87$, $SD = 16.91$) had similar rates of body consciousness, $t(79) = -.41$, $p = .68$.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This experiment was inspired by Miley Cyrus's performances during the 2014 Video Music Awards. After watching Cyrus's over-sexualized and outlandish performances, it became clear that there are discrepancies between what she may consider to be self-confidence and what other people deem empowering. As a result, the hypothesis was formed that college students would find pop stars to be more empowering if they were more modestly dressed than if they wore more revealing attire.

The methodology in the current study included exposing participants to pictures of Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus during performances ("Performances") and awards ceremonies ("Posed"), and videos of performances by Adele and Nicki Minaj then having them rate their perceptions of each performer. Additionally, participants completed surveys regarding their own body perception, views of women in general, and their use of various media formats.

Based on participants' reported perceptions of the celebrities after viewing the pictures and videos, the primary hypothesis was supported. Participants rated the more conservatively dressed and behaving celebrities as more empowering than those more scantily dressed and performing in sexually provocative ways. Previous research by Machia and Lamb (2009) reported similar results in their experiment, in which college women believed that women, particularly young women, were negatively portrayed in the media through their over-sexualization. As a result, participants did not consider

women in the media to inspire or accurately represent the average woman in society. Though the idea that a woman is considered more empowering and independent because she does not conform to the rules and normalcies that society upholds about clothing is broadcasted and even praised at times in the media, the surveyed college students in the current study as well as in the Machia and Lamb study indicate that women are perceived with more respect and may be taken more seriously if they dress and behave more modestly or less overtly sexual. These ideas and beliefs may explain why participants rated celebrities like Taylor Swift and Adele, who were fully clothed, as more empowered and empowering than stars like Nicki Minaj and Miley Cyrus who wore extremely revealing outfits and, in Minaj's case, performed in a more sexually explicit manner.

It also was hypothesized in the current study that more frequent exposure to broad media (e.g., television, music, streaming services, etc.) would be correlated with increased objectification of women. This hypothesis was not supported; there was no significant relationship between scores on the Objectification of Women scale and the frequency of use of media reported by the participants. These results differ from previous studies (e.g., Graff, et al., 2013; Mikorski & Szymanski, 2016), which found that those who use and are exposed to media at higher rates are more likely to view women in covetous and offensive ways. The hypothesis may have not been supported in the current because of the size of the sample. If there had been more participants, results may have shown a positive correlation between objectification of women and broad

media exposure. The age of the participants and the lack of variability in their reported media exposure also may have affected the scores. All of the participants in this study were late teens/early twenties and reported consistently high frequency of media use. There is, however, a possibility that older adults may have differing opinions on the subject of empowerment and the modern day celebrity. As a result of the technology boom in the 1990s and early 2000s, the ways and means by which the older generations were exposed to media is drastically different than the context for millennials during their developmental years - throughout childhood and high school. The same situation applies to younger children between the ages of five and twelve as well. While the modern college student experienced a radical increase in technology as children, modern-day adolescents are perpetually exposed to and bombarded with different types of media, including those publicizing over-sexualized models and sexually explicit messages. It would be interesting to survey and compare both older adults and younger children in future research to see if the differences in media exposure affect their perceptions and opinions of female empowerment and body image issues.

The final hypothesis of the study predicted that men would report higher objectification of women more than would women. This hypothesis was supported, with males reporting significantly more objectification of women practices and perceptions on the OOW scale. The results support what has been reported in previous studies (e.g., Graff, et al., 2013; Mikorski, & Szymanski, 2016), which also explored the objectification of women in society. Traditional masculine gender roles, as discussed in

Mikorski and Szymanski's (2016) study, may play a part in why males objectify women at a higher rate than their female counterparts. Young men grow up in a society where behaviors that are considered more "masculine" are encouraged and rewarded (i.e. hunting, playing sports, watching porn), while others are shamed, mocked, and suppressed (e.g., playing with dolls, dancing, playing "house"). It could be argued that objectifying and belittling women is considered a normal and healthy part of masculine behavior. As a result, boys may be influenced to believe that the role of a woman is to provide physical, sexual, and emotional pleasure for men.

Limitations and Future Directions

Though effort was made to make the female pop stars as representative and diverse as possible, biased pre-study opinions could have affected how certain questions were answered. Since opinions of celebrities change rapidly and often over time, it is difficult to control this potential confound. We did not assess their perceptions of these female performers prior to viewing the videos and pictures in the study. Further, recent events could have impacted the participants' perceptions of the celebrities. For example, Taylor Swift has held a reputation for being a wholesome, relatable, good girl in recent years. When data collection began for the current study, Swift generally had maintained this positive image. Over the course of the experiment, however, Swift had a high-profile break up with another celebrity that potentially damaged her "good girl" reputation. Swift has been accused of being a serial dater (Falzone, 2013), and suspicions were recently aroused in the media that she may have been unfaithful in her more recent

relationship. It could be suggested that no matter how scantily or fully clothed Swift was in the pictures, participants may have rated her differently based on current media presentations about her and her dating relationships. Conversely, Miley Cyrus, who has been renowned for her outlandish, controversial, and revealing clothing, has recently experienced more positive attention from the media and the general public. Since her arrival as a judge on the highly popular show, “The Voice,” the media has focused on Cyrus and cast her in a more favorable light. As a result of this new media image and potential increasing popularity, perceptions of Cyrus in the current study may have been influenced in positive ways. Because some of the data for the current study were collected before Swift’s reputation was called into question and before Cyrus’s popularity increased, the outcome of the results may have been affected by these factors. More research should be conducted to control for these circumstances and opinions. It would be interesting to see if similar pictures and videos of random, ordinary people (i.e., non celebrities) were shown to participants to see if results differ.

Despite the fact that both male and female college students were represented in the study, the vast majority of participants were female. Had more males taken part in the study, there might have been some variation or difference in the results. Future research in this area may want to focus solely on male opinions and perceptions of female empowerment.

Since the subjects of the image and video media were well-known celebrities, it could be argued that participants entered the study with preconceived notions about how

empowering and inspiring they considered these women to be. Participants' answers on the "Popular Media Images of Women" survey would therefore lack objectivity and may show bias for or against particular celebrities. Further exploration of this topic would need to control for possible favoritism or prejudice by using images and videos of random subjects who are not as well-known.

Conclusion

Though two of the hypothesis of the experiment were not supported, it was shown that men do objectify women more than other females, and that participants of the study found celebrities who were more modestly dressed and acted in less sexualized and more wholesome ways were perceived as more empowering than their counterparts. Female empowerment and the attempts to define it has been brought to the forefront of some of society's greatest moral, ethical, and cultural issues in recent years. What is the difference between this empowerment and sheer vulgarity? What types of images are being presented to the younger generation as models to look up and emulate? Do celebrities who perform in scanty outfits performing in ways that would make most people blush inspire confidence? According to this study's results, female empowerment is something more than having the ability and audaciousness to wear whatever one wants. To instigate empowerment and confidence, it seems one must exude those feelings through methods other than dancing and dressing provocatively as some female pop stars do. Motivating and courageous environmental and human rights activists like Bindi Irwin and Malala Yousafzai, as well as highly acclaimed pop stars such as Adele and

Taylor Swift are examples of young women who have taken the world by storm, inspiring young adults, not through emphasizing their physical assets, but by their strength of characters, wholesome actions, and uplifting attitudes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Demographic Form

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. I am: ____ yrs old
2. I am: ___ Male ___ Female
3. My ethnicity can best be described as (circle one):
 - a. African American
 - b. Caucasian/White
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Asian
 - e. Other: _____
 - f. I do not wish to answer.
4. I am currently a ___ at MTSU (circle one):
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate student
 - f. I do not wish to answer.
5. My religious affiliation can best be described as (circle one):
 - a. Buddhist
 - b. Christian
 - c. Hindu
 - d. Islamic
 - e. Jewish
 - f. Other: _____
 - g. I do not wish to answer.

Appendix B

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale

For each item, please circle the answer that best characterizes your attitudes or behaviors.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1. I rarely think about how I look. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. During the day, I think about how I look many times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. I rarely worry about how I look to other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 12. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Even when I can't control my weight, I think I'm an okay person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks they are born with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. A large part of being in shape is having that kind of body in the first place. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. I think a person can look pretty much how they want to if they are willing to work at it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. I really don't think I have much control over how my body looks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. I think a person's weight is mostly determined by the genes they are born with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight, it's probably always going to be about the same. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. I can weight what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix C
Media Exposure Form

1. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend watching television?
 - a) 0-2 hours
 - b) 3-5 hours
 - c) 6-8 hours
 - d) 9+ hours

2. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend listening to music?
 - a) 0-2 hours
 - b) 3-5 hours
 - c) 6-8 hours
 - d) 9+ hours

3. Approximately how many hours do you spend watching or listening to other forms of media (movie and TV streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, music streaming services such as Spotify, Pandora, and Apple Music, and/or playing video games)?
 - a) 0-2 hours
 - b) 3-5 hours
 - c) 6-8 hours
 - d) 9+ hours

4. What movie/television genres primarily watch?
 - a) Romantic comedy
 - b) Horror/Thriller
 - c) Drama
 - d) Action
 - e) Comedy
 - f) Other _____

5. What genre of music do you primarily listen to?
- a) Pop
 - b) Hip-hop/rap
 - c) Classical
 - d) Rock
 - e) R&B
 - f) Other _____
6. What medium of entertainment do you most frequently use?
- a) Television
 - b) Laptop/computer
 - c) Tablet
 - d) Phone
 - e) Video game system
 - f) Other _____
7. How often do you read culturally popular magazines (*People, OK Magazine, Sports Illustrated, etc.*)?
- a) Daily
 - b) Weekly
 - c) Monthly
 - d) Every now and again
 - e) Almost never
8. How often do you watch music videos?
- a) Daily
 - b) Weekly
 - c) Monthly
 - d) Every now and again
 - e) Almost never

Appendix D
Objectification of Women Form

1. I always **speak** of women in appropriate ways.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

2. I always **think** of women in appropriate ways.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

3. I base my judgment of a woman on her appearance.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

4. I rate how pretty/ugly a woman is.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

5. I negatively comment on other women behind their backs.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

6. Women should be able to wear whatever they want, no matter how revealing it may be.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

7. I talk about women as if they are objects.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

8. I notice a woman's body before her face.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

9. Catcalling women is a form of flattery.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

10. Using crude humor at the expense of a woman is acceptable as long as it's a joke.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|

11. I enjoy watching pornography.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

12. I watch porn on a regular basis.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

13. Lusting after a woman is ok as long as no harm is done to her.

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

Appendix E
Popular Media Images of Women

1. This woman has respect for herself.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

2. I respect this woman.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

3. I respect other women because of her.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

4. This image is a positive representation of a woman.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

5. This woman is empowered.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

6. This woman makes me feel empowered.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

7. This image is an accurate representation of female empowerment.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

8. This woman is confident in her body.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

9. When I look at this woman I feel confident in my body.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

10. This woman is inspiring.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

11. I base my judgment of this woman because of what she is doing.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

12. It is hard not to base my judgment of this woman because of what she is doing.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

13. I objectify this woman because of what she is wearing.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

14. It is difficult not to objectify this woman because of what she's wearing.

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| True | Somewhat True | Neutral | Somewhat False | False |

Appendix F

Consent for Participation

INSTRUCTIONS FOR INVESTIGATOR

The following is a template for a complete informed consent document. As a guide, it can be partially revised to fit your study. However, the first two (2) paragraphs and all questions need to be included, as required the by the Office of Human Research Protections.

If you choose to alter or waive consent for your study, you must provide justification to do so. Fill out the appropriate portion of the Request for Waiver or Alteration of Consent and attach it to your IRB application. The form can be accessed at <http://www.mtsu.edu/irb/irbforms.shtml>

If a question is not applicable to your study, simply insert n/a. You should also eliminate suggested language (in brackets and red type) if not pertinent to your study, to enhance participant comprehension. If used for a parent/legal guardian, alter language to refer to child.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Compliance Officer

compliance@mtsu.edu

Box 134

Sam Ingram Building 011B

(615) 494-8918

**Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: Samantha "Bennie" Hunt

Study Title: Female "empowerment" through clothing and media and its correlation with body image

Institution: MTSU

Name of participant: _____ Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

1. Purpose of the study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study because we want to know college students' interpretation of what "female empowerment" in media images indicates, and will assess the possible correlations this perception has with self body image.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

You will be asked to provide demographic information, view pictures and videos of females in current popular media, and answer questionnaires based on those images and video clips, as well as about your general use of and exposure to popular media. You also will complete a body image questionnaire. Participation will take about 40-45 minutes.

3. Expected costs:

There are no costs for participating in this project.

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

We do not anticipate any inconveniences or risks associated with your participation in this study. The images and video clips might trigger negative views of your or other women's bodies, but no material involves nudity or any sexually explicit images or videos. Answering some items on the questionnaire may be uncomfortable for some people because they ask for your perception of your own body image.

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

MTSU will not provide compensation in the case of study related injury.

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study are for us to better understand the relationship between perceived female “empowerment” in popular media and the amount and type of clothing many female media figures wear, as well as the relationship of these perceptions to one’s own body image.

b) The potential benefits to you from this study are that you may consider how your exposure to media images might influence your thoughts and ideas.

7. Alternative treatments available:

This study is not about any treatments.

8. Compensation for participation:

Your compensation for participating in this study is the one research participation credit you receive for the Psychology Research Pool.

9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

You may be asked to withdraw from the study if you are disruptive during the assessment process.

10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

There are no negative consequences for choosing not to participate or to withdrawing from this study.

11. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study or possible injury, please feel free to contact Bennie Hunt at sbh3n@mtmail.mtsu.edu, or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Ujcich Ward at Kimberly.ward@mtsu.edu

12. Confidentiality. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

13. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

Date

Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

Date

Signature

Printed Name and Title

Appendix G MTSU IRB Approval Letter

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Thursday, March 31, 2016

Investigator(s): Samantha Bernadette Hunt (Student PI) and Kimberly Ulcich Ward
 Investigator(s') Email(s): *sbh3n@mtmail.mtsu.edu; kimberly.ward@mtsu.edu*
 Department: Psychology

Study Title: ***Female "empowerment" as demonstrated by clothing in popular media***
 Protocol ID: **16-2236**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

| | | |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| IRB Action | APPROVED for one year from the date of this notification | |
| Date of expiration | 3/31/2017 | |
| Participant Size | 150 (ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY) | |
| Participant Pool | MTSU students (18-25 age) | |
| Exceptions | NONE | |
| Restrictions | Signed informed consent | |
| Comments | Using the Psychology Research Pool | |
| Amendments | Date | Post-approval Amendments |
| | NONE | |

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (3/31/2019) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to 3/31/2017. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews. Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study MUST be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

Continuing Review Schedule:

| Reporting Period | Requisition Deadline | IRB Comments |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| First year report | 2/28/2017 | INCOMPLETE |
| Second year report | 2/28/2018 | INCOMPLETE |
| Final report | 2/28/2019 | INCOMPLETE |